By Liam Timmins

Echoes of the Chenda Melam drums filled Moore Community Hall where the Ballinasloe Indian Cultural Community hosted another fantastic occasion, celebrating the vibrant Onam festival. Among the pageantries were dance performances, instrumental performances, and a mouthwatering culinary journey of the country's best cuisine.

This is the second event hosted by the BICC following the success of the EVE-23 gathering in April. Onam itself is a 10-day celebration welcoming the rice harvest, with roots in South India. Additionally, the period commemorates the exiled King Mahabali's annual return to his state of Kerala after being banished by his opposition.

The festivities at Moore Hall saw over 300 participants, including representatives of both the Indian and Irish communities. Activities commenced as early as 07:00 with the creation of Pookalams, carpets of intricate floral designs created by hand.

At noon, a formal inauguration ceremony marked the official beginning of the day. A captivating recital followed of the Chenda Melam, a traditional percussion ensemble, along with a group performance of the graceful Thiruvathira dance.

The event peaked when a talented group of approximately 50 performers came together for a beautifully choreographed flash-mob, dancing in harmony with a fusion of diverse musical styles.

However, the highlight for many attendees was the grand Onam Sadhya, a feast featuring 19 distinct vegetarian dishes. The culinary experience showcased a variety of flavourful plates native to Kerala cooked by volunteers in the community.

Dancing and musical recitals continued late into the evening with groups competing for the best performance. The night crowned team Manjappada as champions, followed by second place team Chembada, and third team Shamrocks.

The BICC committee were pleased with the event's success as a heartwarming family gathering where numerous Irish and Indian guests enthusiastically participated. They expressed their enthusiasm for organising future occasions, intending to host more inclusive and open gatherings for the Ballinasloe community and surrounds which foster cultural exchange and solidarity.

BICC President Aju Abraham thanked the events many sponsors including the Ballinasloe Credit Union, Money Maximising, Viswas, Asia Land, Nearby Athlone and Confident Travel Limited.

Further updates on upcoming and ongoing activities can be found on their Facebook page at "Bicc Ireland Malayali".

Chenda Melam musical ensemble.

Attendees enjoying the Onam Sadhya feast.

Ballinasloe People of the Year Awards 2023
Shearwater Hotel, 16th November 2023 with MC Darren Frehill
Nominations now Open for 8 categories
1. Arts, Cultural and Heritage Award
2. Sports and Recreation Volunteer
3. Sports and Recreation Team Award
4. Sports and Recreation Individual Award
5. Youth Volunteer Award
6. Volunteer Award
7. Community Group Award
8. Hall of Fame Award
(Lifetime Achievement Accolade)
Closing Date Thursday 5th October 2023
Town Team Crew and Winners
BALLINASLOE PEOPLE OF THE YEAR AWARDS
Nomination Forms & Full Details available on BACD.ie & Ballinasloe.ie
KPW Print Management
BALLINASLOE Credit Union LOCAL LOYAL LENDING
SHEARWATER HOTEL & SPA
Presentations to our Local International Athletes